

Message Text

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ACTION EA-13

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ADP-00 NSC-10 NSCE-00 PM-03 L-02 CIAE-00

INR-09 NSAE-00 RSC-01 DODE-00 NEA-06 AID-10 IO-03

PRS-01 RSR-01 /074 W

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R 101005 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8501

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 3924

LIMDIS

E. O. 11652 GDS

TAGS PFOR, VS

SUBJECT: ASPAC, REGIONAL GROUPINGS, JAPAN AND AUSTRALIA

REF: (A) STATE 028417; (B) TOKYO 2217; (C) BANGKOK 3185; (D)
SAIGON 17527; (E) SEOUL 0783

SUMMARY: SOUNDINGS AMONG SELECTED ASIA- PACIFIC MISSIONS
IN SAIGON INDICATE THAT JAPANESE AND THAI SUGGESTIONS FOR AN
ASIAN AND/ OR PACIFIC CONFERENCE ON INDOCHINA ADVANCED BY
THEIR AMBASSADORS IN SAIGON WERE LOW KEYED, THAT THEIR
POSITIONS WERE ARRIVED AT INDEPENDENTLY AND WERE NOT THE
RESULT OF JAPANESE MANEUVERING. AND THAT IT WAS NOT INTENDED
TO EXCLUDE THE ROK. INTEREST IN SUCH A CONFERENCE AMONG
ASIAN ENVOYS IN SAIGON HAS APPARENTLY SUBSIDED AND ATTENTION
IS NOW ON PROSPECTS FOR ASEAN 10- NATION " ASIAN FORUM" AND
POSSIBILITY OF FORMING A DONOR COUNTRY GROUP FOR
RECONSTRUCTION OF INDOCHINA. END SUMMARY.

1. PHILIPPINE AMBASSADOR TOLD US MARCH 8 THAT SO- CALLED
RECEPTION AT THE THAI EMBASSY LAST DECEMBER 5 HE TOLD FOREIGN
MINISTER LAM IN PRESENCE THAI AMBASSADOR THAT IF THE
KISSINGER/ LE DUC THO TALKS DID NOT PRODUCE RESULTS THE GVN
SHOULD THINK OF BRINING AN " ASIAN CONSCIENCE" INTO PLAY TO
BRING ABOUT PEACE IN VIET- NAM LAM HAD NOT RESPONDED TO
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THIS BUT THE THAI AMBASSADOR THOUGHT IT WAS A GOOD IDEA, HAD SOON AFTER GONE TO BANGKOK AND ON HIS RETURN TO SAIGON HAD RAISED IT FOR DISCUSSION AT THE FOLLOWING TWO MEETINGS OF THE ASIAN CHIEFS OF MISSION (WHICH TAKE PLACE AROUND THE MIDDLE OF EACH MONTH.) IDEA OF AN ENLARGED ASIAN AND/ OR PACIFIC CONFERENCE RESULTED. THE JAPENSE, WHO DO NOT ALWAYS ATTEND THESE MEETINGS, LATER ENDORSED THIS IDEA, BUT HE DID NOT THINK IT HAD GONE BYEYOND THIS SAIGON GROUP.

2. THE RECENT MEETING OF ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS ON FEBRUARY 15 WHICH CNCENTRATED ON A MORE RESTRICTED " ASIAN FORUM " ANDON THE LIMITED EXPANSION OF ASEAN, HAS EFFECTIVELY PUT AN END TO THE GROUP' S DISCUSSION OF A LARGER CONFERENCE . AT THE FEBRUARY MEETING OF ASIAN AMBASSADORS IN SAIGON, THE JAPANESE HAD SIMPLY PROPOSED A GROUPING OF DONOR COUNTRIES FOR INDOCHINESE RECONSTRUCTION, AS HAD OCCURRED FOR INDONESIA. IT IS TO BE NOTED THAT THIS FEBRUARY MEETING FOLLOWED A MEETING OF JAPENSE CHIEFS OF MISSION IN BANGKOK ON FEBRUARY 17-18.

3. AT NO TIME WAS THERE ANY QUESTION OF EXCLUDING SOUTH KOREA FROM THE EXPANDED ASIAN- PACIFIC MEETING. IN FACT, AT THE FEBRUARY MEETING, THE JAPANESE AMBASSADOR HAD JOKINGLY TOLD SOUTH KOREAN COLLEAGUE THAT KOREA WOULD BE INCLUDED IN A GROUP OF DONOR COUNTRIES SINCE IT IS NOW CLASSIFIED AS AN AFFLUENT NATION.

4. MALAYSIAN CHARGE TOLD US THAT ALTHOUGH THAI AMBASSADOR HERE HAS SHOWN A FAVORABLE ATTITUDE TOWARD A ENLARGED ASIA- PACIFIC CONFERENCE HE BELIEVES THAILAND' S POSITION WAS ARRIVED AT INDEPENDENTLY AND DOES NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT JAPANESE PERSUASION. HE ADDS FURTHER THAT THAILAND IS MUCH MORE INTERESTED IN PUSHING CONCEPT OF A 10- NATION SEA MEETING AND IS FAR AHEADOF ITS ASEAN PARTNERS ON THIS. THE OTHER ASEAN NATIONS DO NOT WANT TO LAUNCH THIS PROJECT FORMALLY UNLESS THEY HAVE ADVANCE ASSURANCE THAT HANOI WILL ATTEND, BUT MALAYSIA ANDOTHERS FEAR THAT HANOI WOULD AT THE VERY LEAST INSIT ON ATTENDANCE BY PRG, PATHET LAO, AND GRUNK. THEY ARE THEREFORE UNDECIDED ON WHAT THE NEXT STEP SHOLD BE CHARGE NOT AWARE OF REPORT THAT INDONESIA TASKED TO SOUD OUT HANOI ON SUBJECT. HE IS CONCERNED THAT IF ASEAN DOES NOT MAKE ANY MOVE TOWARD CONVEING 10- NATION SEA CONFERENCER
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THAILAND MIGHT DECIDE ON ITS OWN TO INVITE THENON- ASEAN SEA

NATIONS TO SEND SPECIAL OBSERVERS TO THAILAND AT TIME OF NEXT ASEAN MINISTERIAL WHICH IS TO TAKE PLACE APRIL 16.

5. HE ALSO QUERIED AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY THIS SUBJECT AND THEY NOT AWARE ANY UNUSUAL JAPANESE OR THAI INITIATIVES ON THIS SUBJECT. THEY AT LEAST HAD NOT BEEN APPROACHED ON IT SINCE INCIDENT REPORTED REF D.

6. REGARDING POSSIBLE GVN ORIGIN FOR SUGGESTION OF A 17- NATION MEETING (REF B) WE HAVE HEARD NOTHING TO SUBSTANTIATE THIS; RUMORS MAY HAVE RESULTED FORM DECEMBER 5 EXCHANGE AT THAI EMBASSY DESCRIBED PARA 1 ABOVE. WE DOUBT THAT GVN HAS FORMULATED ANY POSITION ON A LARGER ASIA- PACIFIC CONFERENCE. GVN' S ESPOUSAL OF ITS OWN 10- NATION SEA MEETING IDEA MAY BE ONLY PRO FORMA, AS IT WAS ORGINATED AS A FEFENSE MECHANISM AGAINST THE ASEAN NEUTRALIZATION PROPOSAL.
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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** LIMDIS

*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts:
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 MAR 1973
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: elyme
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973SAIGON03924
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: RR
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: SAIGON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730325/aaaahlrr.tel
Line Count: 136
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EAP
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: 73 STATE 028417, 73 TOKYO 2217, 73 BANGKOK 3185, 73 SAIGON 17527, 73 SEOUL 0783
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: elyme
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 31 OCT 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <31-Oct-2001 by martinml>; APPROVED <20-Nov-2001 by elyme>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> wfs 971118
Subject: ASPAC, REGIONAL GROUPINGS, JAPAN AND AUSTRALIA
TAGS: PFOR, VM, n/a
To: EA
SECSTATE WASHDC
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005